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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AS](#)
SUBJECT: FURTHER AUSTRALIAN RESPONSE TO NATO GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

REF: A. CANBERRA 865
[1](#)B. STATE 88312

Classified By: Acting POLCOUNS John W. Crowley, for reasons 1.5 (b) and
(d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Australia is willing to participate in NATO's Global Partnership but only under a flexible, informal arrangement that stresses practical cooperation and that avoids a new formal institutional structure, including fixed requirements for meetings and expenditure of resources. The GOA plans to produce a detailed position paper for circulation to NATO members in advance of the Riga Summit in November. As a Global Partner, Australia envisions initial cooperation in training, CBRN incident response, civil-military cooperation, counterterrorism, information exchange and interoperability. It seeks U.S. and UK assessments of thinking within NATO, particularly on the evolution of its relations with non-NATO members, and expects our help in selling Australia's conditions on partnership to other NATO members. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Annabel Anderson, Assistant Secretary for Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe, and John Woods, Director for Northern, Central and Eastern Europe Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), invited acting POLCOUNS and UK High Commission First Secretary Richard Lindsay to DFAT August 4 to hear the GOA interagency-coordinated response to the NATO Global Partnership proposal (reftels).

[1](#)3. (C) Since providing preliminary views in early June (ref A), Anderson explained, DFAT had consulted widely internally, including seeking views of Australian Department of Defence (ADOD) officials and those of the foreign and defense ministers. Summarizing Australia's interaction with NATO to date, she noted Australia had been building on its long-standing relationship, especially over the past 18 months, including exchanging letters as a prelude to concluding an Information Security Agreement, posting a defense representative at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, maintaining an annual Australia-NATO Strategic Dialogue, and contributing troops to the Netherlands Provincial

Reconstruction Team operating under NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The latter commitment in particular had underlined the need to develop a closer relationship with NATO's military forces. Australia's experience with NATO had encountered some bumps, but overall Australia was "delighted" with the way its relationship had been progressing, she said.

¶4. (C) Anderson said Australia was sensitive to the wish of some NATO members that there be no change to the fundamental shape of the organization and no new bureaucratic framework. Australia accepted this and wanted to focus on the pragmatic and to take a "non-billboard" approach to cooperation with NATO, she said. The GOA was grateful to the U.S. and UK for thinking through and pushing the Global Partnership initiative, Anderson said. Australia wanted to learn more from both countries about NATO's internal dynamics and about the debate taking place among NATO members regarding its proposed partnership with non-NATO countries. Australia recognized that opposition from other countries could jeopardize Australia's cooperation with NATO.

Australian Position Paper Emphasizes Informal, Flexible Arrangement

¶5. (C) Anderson outlined the GOA's next steps for addressing the Partnership proposal. The GOA planned to work on a detailed position paper during the month of August, with a view to having it cleared and approved by both the Minister of Defence and Minister of Foreign Affairs before the end of September 2006. She implied that any key messages from the United States or the UK would need to be fed into the proposal during the month of August. Australia planned to circulate the paper to all NATO members, perhaps during the

next Australia-NATO Strategic Dialogue -- the GOA was considering proposing dates for the Dialogue in October 2006 -- but before the Riga Summit in November. Previewing the content, Anderson said the paper would make clear that Australia was not seeking membership in NATO or seeking to establish a new institutional framework. Australia would spell out its preference for practical cooperation under a flexible arrangement that could operate to both sides' mutual interest and benefit. The GOA desired to avoid becoming locked into a formal arrangement with fixed requirements for meetings, expenditure of resources, and the like. Elaborating, she explained that Australia believed that its current high-level political consultations, including the Strategic Dialogue, access to NATO through its defense attache in Brussels, and ad hoc high-level meetings were adequate without the need to introduce a new layer of meetings. A relationship with NATO on the foregoing principles, she said, would give NATO what it wanted and Australia what it wanted. Australia did not want to sign up to the full range of NATO activities. Beyond enhancing military interoperability, specific areas of cooperation Australia wanted to develop with NATO included: training; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) incident response; civil-military cooperation; counterterrorism; and exchanging information on best practices and lessons learned.

Australia Expects U.S., UK Help with Other Members

¶6. (C) Anderson made clear that Australia expected the United States and the United Kingdom to bring the rest of the NATO members along in agreeing to Australia's partnership proposal, and not leave it to Australia to single-handedly sell it. At the same time, however, Australia had already approached some other NATO members -- she mentioned France and Italy -- who had been supportive of Australia's desire for a flexible arrangement.

Not Interested in Asian Regional Bloc Partnership

¶7. (C) The GOA was not comfortable with the idea of lumping Australia together with Japan and South Korea in an East Asian regional partnership arrangement, Anderson told us.

Japan's constitutional restrictions on its military and South Korea's approach to NATO meant that each country had a separate set of issues and requirements. Australia saw benefit in an individual rather than a regional group partnership.

Soliciting U.S. and UK Views

18. (C) Anderson requested U.S. and UK assessments of the thinking within NATO, specifically how NATO viewed the evolution of its relations with non-NATO countries. The GOA also sought American and British feedback on other suggestions for practical cooperation besides areas outlined above. She suggested it might be helpful, not only to Australia but to other Global Partnership candidates, for NATO to send representatives to capitals to explain the organization in detail and to answer questions, for example, about its training facilities, centers of excellence, and command and control of personnel and ownership of assets.

Non-Paper Outlining GOA Views

19. (C) Following is the text of a non-paper that Anderson provided us at the end of her presentation summarizing key points:

Begin text:

The US - UK Demarche on NATO's "Global Partnership"
July 2006

Australia's relationship with NATO

- Australia has worked closely with NATO for many years at

the technical working level focusing on interoperability and standardisation issues.

- NATO's transformation to focus on broader global security issues has resulted in a convergence of interests between Australia and NATO on these challenges.

---we share common democratic values and face similar global security challenges - CT, WMD and failed and fragile states.

---therefore, it makes sense for Australia and NATO to exchange ideas and experiences, as we continue to do through high-level political engagement (such as Defence Minister Nelson's discussions with NATO HQ in June), senior officials' dialogues and through our Defence Adviser in Brussels.

- To date, Australia and NATO have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship focused on practical cooperative activities rather than formal linkages.

---the most significant development has been Australia's decision to contribute 240 troops to the Netherlands Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) which will operate in Afghanistan under NATO's ISAF.

-----this is the first time Australia has deployed to a NATO operation, and this is NATO's first out of area operation.

- To support our cooperation, Australia and NATO exchanged letters as an interim measure ahead of the finalisation of an Information Security Agreement to facilitate the exchange of classified information.

---as a result, Australia and NATO are exchanging valuable information, including on counter-terrorism.

NATO relations with non-members: Australia's views

- Australia is interested in NATO members' discussions on how NATO might deepen relations with non-member countries.

- Australia would welcome a NATO consensus to strengthen relations with nonmembers such as Australia, through a

flexible approach designed to enhance practical cooperation where there is mutual interest and benefit.

---we envisage such an arrangement would encompass exchanges of information and participation in training, exercises, programs and other activities to improve interoperability in agreed areas.

-----Australia is already engaged in and is considering a number of additional opportunities in these areas.

-----we look forward to deepening our dialogue with the US, the UK. and other NATO members on the nature of our cooperation.

- Also at the practical level, discussions on the deployment of Australia's ISAF contribution in Afghanistan are proceeding well

---we would expect to refine our respective requirements to maximise operational cooperation as that process develops over time

---and to enhance interoperability in areas such as the exchange of information with NATO where current experience reveals Scope for improvement

- We note that a mutually agreed informal framework of partnership, rather than a new formal institutional structure is being suggested as a way forward and we agree that this is a worthwhile objective, especially when endorsed by all NATO members.

---Australia is not looking to become a member of NATO nor join one of its formal partnerships.

-----geography and commitments in our own region mean Australia would not be able to service effectively such a formal commitment.

- Australia's preference is that non-members self-select their engagement with NATO at a pace comfortable to each partner, rather than all partners being required to participate in a pre-determined range of activities.

---Australia's already heavy commitments in our region, and our more limited Defence and strategic interests in Europe, mean we must be selective in the activities in which we participate.

---nor would Australia want to see a partnership that was governed by the pace of the slowest partner

---and we support the NATO Secretary-General's observation at the conclusion of the last NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting that NATO should be an Alliance with global partners not a Global Alliance.

- Australia sees value in occasional ad hoc high-level political consultations between NATO and partners.

---those consultations could cover on a needs basis broader shared strategic interests as well as supporting specific operational and other forms of practical cooperation

---they should not, however, be consultations for the sake of consultations.

---Australia's distance from Brussels also means it would not be possible to guarantee senior political representation at all such meetings. In those circumstances Australia's representatives in Brussels could represent Australia's interests.

- Australia remains committed to enhancing its engagement with NATO through practical Cooperation and will continue to reed in views on how the relationship might be developed in

the lead up to the NATO Summit in Riga, Latvia in November
[1](#)2006.

End text.

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